

AS Wycombe Wanderers prepare for their Berks and Bucks Senior Cup tie against Rivet Sports this week the question of just what importance the County Cup holds for clubs, players and supporters, must be raised, coupled with a suggestion to involve Reading FC in the competition.

Reading, handily placed in the Fourth Division of the Football League, are the only professional club in the counties of Berks and Bucks and as the competition went 'open' this season, there seems a strong argument for the club to enter the Senior Cup.

Way back in 1878-79 season it was Reading who became the first club to have their name engraved on the Senior Cup and they followed that with another victory in 1891-92. Thereafter, they dropped out of the competition.

It would be, perhaps, too much to ask Reading to play in the early rounds of the competition but one possibility is for the winners of the Senior Cup to meet Reading at Elm Park at the end of the season in a challenge match. By doing this, the interest in the competition would be increased considerably and also sustained until the final few weeks of the playing season.

As well as that, both the clubs and the County FA would gain financially from the move. Take this season for instance. If Wycombe Wanderers win the cup for the third time in succession this year, the interest in the competition would die after the final. If they were to challenge Reading, who ideally would field their full first team for the match, there could be a crowd of as many as

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4,000 to watch the game. This would surely generate a good deal of interest, especially as Wycombe have done so well in the FA Cup this season, beating Third Division Bournemouth and holding Middlesbrough.

A similar game to the fixture suggested was run for a few years from 1959-64 when the Berks and Bucks FA XI played Reading, with the proceeds going towards the Benevolent Fund. This, however, was not continued due to poor attendances, the expenses being too great to warrant staging the game.

But if a club like Wycombe, Slough or Chesham were to play Reading their own supporters would make up a considerable part of the attendance while the game would be of some interest to Reading fans.

The only problem with the idea is this. If a surprise team won the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup one year — you never know, Rivets could win it this season — the prospect of a smaller team playing Reading would be farcical. The figures suggest this is highly unlikely to occur, however. The last surprise winners of the cup were Abingdon Town, back in 1959 and since the war the trophy has always been shared between Wycombe, Slough (Town and Centre), Maidenhead, Chesham, Wokingham and Windsor (once).

As it stands at the moment, the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup — apart from the almost annual Wycombe v Slough matches — does not attract big attendances. The competition has kept to its present format for many years. Perhaps it's time for a change.